

How to Get the Most out of a Career Fair

Primarily, the Career Fair is designed for building connections and learning about employers and opportunities of interest. You won't walk away with a job, but you should discover something new and move to that next step of the process.

Before the Career Fair

- Research the organizations that might be of interest to you
- Read literature about the organization (use the employer's website, LinkedIn, and other resources)
- Be prepared to ask questions of the representatives...practice out loud; it helps (but don't ask the what's-in-it-for-me questions such as salary, benefits, or other perks)
- Know yourself and identify specific experiences where you have demonstrated your strengths
- Know why you want to work for their organization...if you don't know, they won't either
- Use the above to prepare a verbal summary/elevator pitch
- Companies may ask why you are there (at their booth) ...be prepared to demonstrate your interest
- Don't ask what positions they have available...review their websites so you know in advance
- Develop a strong résumé and bring on résumé paper for distribution (bring several more than you think you'll need)

During the Career Fair

- Make a good first impression; be genuinely interested
- Make eye contact immediately when introducing yourself and give a firm handshake to start
- Remember the representative's name; if not, casually refer to their name tag
- Smile and be polite - enthusiasm is an important quality
- Dress professionally, wear a conservative, well-fitting and wrinkle-free suit
- Take the right things with you: résumés, a professional pen, leather folder/portfolio, note pad, etc.
- Get your bearings upon entering the room and make a navigational plan
- If you need a 'warm-up,' start with an employer that is number four or five on your list

Communication

- Body language can speak louder than the spoken word: do not fidget, play with your hair, rock, or look around when talking or being spoken to
- Do not chew gum or use your cell phone
- Listen carefully to what the representative has to say!
- Enunciate clearly, use proper grammar, and talk loudly enough to be heard
- Stand *next to* the recruiter as he/she reads your résumé, and point out the highlights
- Ask for a business card or write down the representative's name and email (even if it's jobs@...)
- Find out if they're going to conduct interviews on campus and what, if anything, you can do to advance your candidacy

Explore all of your options!

- Speak with organizations that you had not considered before
- Take the initiative and engage in meaningful conversations with representatives
- Representatives are here to provide information about their organizations and career fields
- Not all representatives know everything about all positions, so use the interaction to find out more about the employer and get contact information for a more appropriate person
- If your favorite employer isn't looking for your major/degree at this particular event (but they do other times), mention that you recognize that but would like to learn more about the organizational culture, etc. Sometimes those conversations lead to other connections
- If a table has a long line, talk with representatives that don't have long lines, even if they're not your top choice, and check back at those tables that had long lines later in the day!

After the Career Fair

- Sending a thank you email is not only appropriate, it can also bring attention to your name and may move you from the 'maybe' pile to the 'yes' pile
 - Make time to go online **that night** and complete any online applications you have not yet; many employers will make decisions the same day whether or not a candidate moves forward, and can not do so unless you've completed all of the necessary steps
 - Connect with the recruiters you've met at the fair on LinkedIn
 - You can also call to make sure that your application is complete; when calling, be prepared and know/practice what you are going to say beforehand
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Questions for Representatives at the Career Fair

First and foremost, questions should be natural. Be yourself. Don't fire off questions; maintain a natural flow. Before beginning with your questions, be sure to introduce yourself and establish rapport with the representatives. Listen carefully to their answers. Be courteous. Before leaving, be sure to close the conversation and thank them.

Questions You May Want to Ask Organization Representatives

What does your organization consider the 5 most important qualities in an employee?

What courses do you suggest in order to be a successful candidate?

As an entry-level employee, what can I expect to be doing 2, 5, 10 years from now?

What made you choose this organization? Why do you stay?

What things has your organization accomplished of which you are especially proud?

For how many years does the entry-level employee typically stay with the organization?

What goals does your employer have for 20xx and beyond?

How many employees are in my area of interest (which is..)?

What advice would you have for someone like me?

Does your organization hire on a continual basis or just at certain times of the year?

How long does the hiring process take? What are the next steps?

Do you expect your employees to relocate during their tenure with you?

Best: Ask for clarification about or a question relevant to what you've read about the employer online!

Questions an Employer Representative May Ask You

Why do you want to work for us? (or, Why are you here?)

How did you decide on your major? Why do you want to work in this field?

How are you going to achieve your career goals?

What sets you apart from other people who want this job?

What is your greatest strength? What is your greatest weakness?

What are your goals for the next five years?

What qualities do you think this position requires?

What was your most significant accomplishment in college/graduate school?

What do you know about our organization?

What do you see as the perfect or ideal job for you?

What would you like to learn within the next five months?

What questions do you have for me?